

MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOR PREVENTION OF WAR: AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY OF PRE-ELECTION POLICY STATEMENTS FROM LATE JUNE 2010

Presently Australia's biggest defence deployment is to Afghanistan. With the 2010 federal election only weeks away **neither the ALP nor the Liberal Party has yet released their official foreign affairs policy**. No policy statements show any indication of a real exit strategy from Afghanistan.

A majority of Australians are opposed to military involvement in Afghanistan – and increasingly so. The 2010 Lowy Institute poll found that 54% of respondents believed that Australia "should not continue to be militarily involved in Afghanistan", up 3% from 2009. There was also a drop in those confident that "Australia has clear aims in Afghanistan: 43% - down from 47%.

Under the ALP, the Australian commitment to Afghanistan remains open-ended – or until the United States no longer requires our assistance. Recent statements focus on Australia's role in training Afghan forces **in order to ensure peace and security for Australia**. Defence minister John Faulkner, in his 23 June ministerial statement on Afghanistan, reaffirmed Labor's commitment, the primary aims of which are "*...denying sanctuary to terrorists...working to stabilise the country; and to our alliance with the United States...Our fundamental objective in Afghanistan is to combat a clear threat from international terrorism to both international security and our own national security.*" Senator Faulkner reiterated these points in July at the Lowy Institute and said that "*...the Government will not keep Australian troops in Afghanistan one day longer than necessary. But they should be there as long as is necessary.*" Prime Minister Gillard has said little on the issue of Afghanistan, except to echo her Minister that "The mission there is to train the Afghan National Army so that they are in a position to guarantee stability and security in the nation. Our best estimates...are that that will take **between two and four years but...**the thing that defines how long we're going to be there is getting the job done, not a deadline in time."

The Liberal Party also has failed to indicate any intention to cease Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan. Other than agreeing with Labor's implausible position that that **peace and security in Afghanistan equates with peace and security for Australia**, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott has not ventured past the usual political rhetoric of **supporting Australia's troops** in Afghanistan. Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop has also failed to offer a firm statement about the Liberal's position on Afghanistan, other than to agree with Labor that "*We want to ensure that our troops are achieving the desired outcome and that is to **build up the Afghani defence forces** so that they can take control of the security and defence in the country*". Both have said that in government they would be **guided by the advice of the defence force's military chiefs**..

The Australian Greens are the only party to have a published policy on Afghanistan. The Greens have pledged the **immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and Iraq**. In contrast to the ALP and Liberals who advocate a military presence in Afghanistan, the Greens support a strategy of **nation building through development aid and projects that foster democratic government to promote the peace and security agenda**. Furthermore, the Greens are the only party to raise and openly discuss the issue of troop withdrawal from Afghanistan with Senator Bob Brown again calling for a parliamentary debate on the matter earlier this year.

Prepared by MAPW National Student Representative Raymun Ghumman, 5 August 2010

**SOURCES: LABOR, LIBERAL AND GREENS POLICY STATEMENTS
FROM LATE JUNE TO EARLY AUGUST 2010**

Australian Labor Party

Source	Quote
<p>23 June 2010</p> <p>Ministerial statement on Afghanistan</p> <p>Australian Government, Department of Defence</p> <p>http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/FaulknerTranscripttpl.cfm?CurrentId=10480</p>	<p>John Faulkner</p> <p>Australia remains committed to our mission in Afghanistan; to denying sanctuary to terrorists; to working to stabilise Afghanistan with the United States...</p> <p>Our fundamental objective in Afghanistan is to combat terrorism to both international security and our own. We cannot afford, and Australians cannot afford, to let Afghanistan become a training ground for terrorist organisations. Organisations that provide Taliban support, have a global reach and are a global threat. The attack against the Australian embassy in Indonesia, last year...Left unchecked, the dangerous influence of such organisations can rapidly extend into our own region.</p> <p>As we bring the fight to the Taliban in more parts of Afghanistan, we are seeing incidents. But we are making headway. And the mission that President Obama last year is not yet complete. So the fight is yet to play out. The United Nations' report also acknowledges significant positive developments, and underlines the need for the international community to continue to support Afghanistan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</u> will provide additional commitment will manage Australian-Afghan relationships both in Uruzgan and in Kabul, and support Afghanistan and our international partners; • <u>AusAID</u> has increased its staff in Afghanistan and support the Afghan Government in building infrastructure and agriculture;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>Australian Federal Police</u> has increased its training of the Afghan National Police to improve security in Uruzgan; • The <u>ADF</u> will provide a dedicated Force Protection element to support an increased civilian mission. • And this increased civilian effort from the Defence and the AFP comes on top of a longstanding military effort in Afghanistan.
<p>7 July 2010</p> <p>Transcript of interview with Deborah Cameron</p> <p>ABC Sydney</p> <p>http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6880</p>	<p>HOST: Now, you also remarked in your speech that the number of refugee applications had now exceeded about 70,000. That would mean that many more would be returned to their country if you've been to a couple of very tragic funerals of our country is embroiled in war that may yet be unwinnable, corrupt, the enemy is tyrannical. Is there an ethical obligation to defend defenceless people back there?</p> <p>PM Gillard: Well, I think the ethics, the morality of our protection and our generosity to people who are fleeing. We are signatory to the Refugee Convention and we have to look at people like, who has the status of a genuine refugee. For those people then the right thing is to return them to their country.</p> <p>I'm not going to try and put a simple conclusion on Afghanistan. You're right, our soldiers are facing a very difficult situation. I've been to two funerals as Prime Minister already, and I've seen of the bravery and the dangers that our soldiers are facing. Our country are stabilising and of course, as you say, we have to look at the individual and where they come from.</p>
<p>16 July 2010</p> <p>Speech by the Minister for Defence at the Lowy Institute</p> <p>http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/FaulknerSpechtpl.cfm?CurrentId=10627</p>	<p>John Faulkner</p> <p>Following al Qaeda's attacks on 11 September 2001, we have to dismantle and defeat al Qaeda which, for too many years, has been a training ground for its attacks within Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. It is one of its alliance partner, and the ANZUS treaty was in place.</p> <p>...Bali was bombed by Jemaah Islamiah terrorists from Afghanistan... Since then, the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, international hotels in Jakarta, have been bombed.</p> <p>These attacks demonstrated that groups like al Qaeda are a threat that impacts on our national interests. Australia is</p>

	<p>Government has a fundamental responsibility to ac</p> <p>Ladies and gentlemen, that is why we are in Afghan</p> <p>UN Mandate and on the invitation of the governme</p> <p>defined goals...: to deny sanctuary to terrorists; to</p> <p>support our alliance with the United States. We pu</p> <p>they will help protect Australia and Australians.</p> <p>Afghanistan and Pakistan are inextricably linked. O</p> <p>Pakistan's efforts to combat militant extremism wit</p> <p>...The reality is that the cost of failure in Afghanistan</p> <p>Were we to leave Afghanistan with our task unfinis</p> <p>control over a large part of the country...It also allo</p> <p>Were we to leave now we would see the undoing o</p> <p>schools, roads, bridges and hospitals...We have fun</p> <p>the lives of ordinary Afghan citizens</p> <p>Nor should we step-back from our alliance with the</p> <p>weather friend; and an alliance commitment does n</p> <p>it's easy.</p> <p>And were we to leave now, with our work of trainin</p> <p>Army unfinished...</p> <p>As I have often said, the Government will not keep</p> <p>day longer than necessary. But they should be ther</p>
<p>25 July 2010</p> <p>Transcript of 2010 Federal Election Debate</p> <p>Herald Sun</p> <p>http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/special-reports/transcript-of-2010-federal-election-debate/story-fn5ko0pw-1225896808486</p>	<p>TINGLE: I had a question for both of you, or questi</p> <p>conference of a lot of Australia's allies in Kabul last</p> <p>strategy. Ms Gillard, do you intend sticking with th</p> <p>ambition to withdraw troops in two to four years ti</p> <p>Kabul conference, is sending more troops still an ap</p> <p>were in Government?</p> <p>SPEERS: Prime Minister.</p> <p>GILLARD: My position is the same as Kevin Rud</p> <p>mission. The mission there is to train the Afghan</p> <p>position to guarantee stability and security in the</p> <p>advised, are that that will take between two and</p> <p>defines how long we're going to be there is gettin</p> <p>time. So our advice currently is the mission will</p>

LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

Source	Quote
<p>23 July 2010</p> <p>ABC2 News breakfast with Virginia Trioli and Joe O'Brien</p> <p> http://www.juliebishop.com.au/transcripts/424-abc2-news-breakfast-with-virginia-trioli-and-joe-obrien.html </p>	<p> JOE O'BRIEN One of the issues front and centre before the National Security Committee at the moment is Afghanistan. Of course the campaign was suspended yesterday for the funeral of fallen digger Nathan Bewes. If the Coalition wins Government is it committed to looking to sending extra troops to Afghanistan? </p> <p> JULIE BISHOP Well clearly we would take advice from the military chiefs as to the state in Afghanistan at the time. We want to ensure that our troops are achieving the desired outcome and that is to build up the Afghani defence forces so that they can take control of the security and defence in the country. </p> <p> JOE O'BRIEN Does the recent spike in casualties though give you pause for thought about that commitment? </p> <p> JULIE BISHOP Of course it always give you concern when there are casualties in a war zone like Afghanistan and we would take advice from the military chiefs as to whether we were achieving our outcome, which is to build up the Afghani defence forces so that they can take control of the national security of the country. </p>
<p>25 July 2010</p> <p>Transcript of 2010 Federal Election Debate</p> <p>Herald Sun</p> <p> http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/special-reports/transcript-of-2010-federal-election-debate/story-fn5ko0pw-1225896808486 </p>	<p> TINGLE: I had a question for both of you, or questions for both of you, on Afghanistan. A conference of a lot of Australia's allies in Kabul last week was talking about a 2014 exit strategy. Ms Gillard, do you intend sticking with the former Prime Minister's stated ambition to withdraw troops in two to four years time and, Mr Abbot, in light of the Kabul conference, is sending more troops still an appropriate strategy to pursue if you were in Government? </p> <p> SPEERS: I might just say we're nearly out of time for the question and answer session so if we can keep these tight. Tony Abbott. </p> <p> ABBOTT: Yeah, well, Laura look, uh, I think our troops in Afghanistan are doing a very </p>

	<p>difficult job magnificently and I think it's important that they stay there until that job is done and the job is to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorists. Now, as for what might happen in the future, let's see how things develop and I would respond as Prime Minister, appropriately I hope, to any development but I would always do it with the advice of the military chiefs.</p>
<p>27 July 2010</p> <p>Tony Abbott Doorstop MacKay</p> <p>http://www.liberal.org.au/Latest-News/2010/07/27/Tony-Abbott-Doorstop-Mackay.aspx</p>	<p>QUESTION: Mr Abbott... My second question relates to what we've seen regarding the leaking of the documents in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Do we now need to reassess our strategy in Afghanistan and what we're doing there, given that?</p> <p>TONY ABBOTT: Well, let me make it very clear that I totally support the Australian military effort in Afghanistan. It is vital to our country's security that Afghanistan not become a safe haven for terrorism. Afghanistan was the training base for some of the Bali bombers. It was the training base for most of the September 11 bombers. We have got to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for terrorism. I fully support the Australian troop commitment in Afghanistan.</p>

THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS

Source	Quote
<p>2 February 2010</p> <p>Media release: Greens bring on Afghanistan troop withdrawal debate</p> <p>Bob Brown</p> <p>http://bob-brown.greensmps.org.au/content/media-release/greens-bring-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-debate</p>	
<p>10 July 2010</p> <p>Lee Rhiannon, NSW candidate for The Greens</p> <p>Afghan war – sleeper election issue</p> <p>http://greens.org.au/content/afghan-war-sleeper-election-issue</p>	<p>“In Australia the Greens are the only parliamentary calling for Australian troops to be withdrawn.</p> <p>I am often asked about the Greens plans for post war Afghanistan. As the history of this region demonstrates this war cannot be won our collective challenge should be how we assist Afghans to consolidate peace and justice in a democratic society.</p> <p>Transferring the budget for Australia’s military activities in Afghanistan to the domestic needs of this ravaged country should be our priority. Providing assistance for the rebuilding of infrastructure, boosting development aid and targeting programs for women and children would be of much greater benefit in reducing terrorist influence in the region.”</p>
<p>The Greens policies: international relations</p> <p>http://greens.org.au/policies/human-rights-democracy/international-relations</p>	<p>Measures</p> <p>The Australian Greens will</p> <p>37. immediately withdraw Australian forces from Iraq and Afghanistan</p>

Other sources

'Major parties avoid topic of Afghanistan' Cameron Stewart, The Australian 23 July 2010

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/major-parties-avoid-topic-of-afghanistan/story-fn59niix-1225895821396>

'Main parties will keep Afghanistan off the radar' Dan Oakes, The Sydney Morning Herald 26 July 2010

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-election/main-parties-will-keep-afghanistan-off-radar-20100725-10qox.html>